THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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Reappraisal

The College English Association its inception two years ago. membership, restricted to teach- in recognized undergraduate leges, and those who have so ght, is steadily growing. For e time before that there had ted a feeling among the teach- of English in the colleges of the ntry that no existing organiza- or group provided them with opportunity to talk over the ctical problems and the larger ories of their profession. Some these men remembered that the dern Language Association of erica had been, in the beginning, such a group of professors came together to consult con- ning their common problems in hing and research. But through years the Modern Language ociation has evolved, quite prop- , into an institution whose pri- y interests are those of re- rch. In the meantime, the teach- of foreign languages, such as nch, German, Spanish, and the ndinavian tongues, have formed arate associations meeting at same time and place as the dern Language Association for purpose of discussing their mon classroom problems. It to meet this situation that the lege English Association was med.

he objection has been raised there was already an organi- on occupying the ground—the tional Council of Teachers of glish. But the men and women were instrumental in forming College English Association felt the National Council had wn too large and too broadly usive to serve well their spe- needs; and that they needed to anize independently for the dis- ion of their peculiar problems. they applied to the Executive mmittee of the Modern Lan- ge Association for the privi- of meeting in association with parent organization at the same e and place each year, and were ted to do so.

he College English Association n some respects a revolutionary anization, and it is perhaps essary to say against what and what it revolts. Like many good olutions it attempts to find its hority in the past, and as I have gested it finds that sanction in first meetings of the Modern guage Association. I do not be- e that many members of the lege English Association are in olt from scholarship, but a con- erable number is in revolt from kind of blind fact-gathering olarship which has threatened overwhelm our good sense. It robable that the ablest group in membership of the College glish Association is that made of young men who are eager to

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Preliminary Notice of Annual Meeting

The second annual meeting of CEA will be held in Boston, December 26-28, in conjunction with the Modern Language Association. CEA headquarters will be in the Statler, but one of the smaller hotels may offer special rates for members applying in advance. Scheduled meetings will be held in Boston University close by; committees may also use rooms in the neighboring University Club. The CEA dinner, inexpensive and informal, will not conflict with the MLA banquet. Suggestions as to arrangements may be addressed to the chairman of the local committee, Dr. Robert Gay, Simmons College.

A tentative outline of the program appears in the column below. At each meeting general discussions will hold chief place.

Information as to railroad rates will be found in later notices.

Literary Experimentation

(Members of the CEA will recall the discussion started by Mr. Henry Canby and carried on in these columns over the desirability of English courses exclusively devoted to contemporary literature. In the course of that argument it was pointed out that much writing of the moment is experimental, and that the author himself is testing devices and techniques which later may be abandoned.

Miss Willa Cather who has been overburdened by letters from strangers, especially teachers and students, asking her judgment on literary matters, may have had her burden made heavier as a result of her contribution to this argument in last December's "Nems Letter." Yet she graciously permits us to reprint the following paragraphs from a letter to a friend which will serve to illustrate her own experimental attitude in one of her books.—Ed.)

Let me try to answer your question. When I wrote "The Professor's House," I wished to try two experiments in form. The first is the device often used by the early French and Spanish novelists; that of inserting the *Nouvelle* into the *Roman*. "Tom Outland's Story" has been published in French and Polish and Dutch, as a short narrative for school children studying English.

But the experiment which interested me was something a little more vague, and was very much akin to the arrangement followed in sonatas in which the academic sonata form was handled somewhat freely. Just before I began the book I had seen, in Paris, an exhibition of old and modern Dutch paintings. In many of them, the scene presented was a living room warmly furnished, or a kitchen full of food and coppers. But in most of the interiors, whether drawing-room or kitchen, there was a square window, open, through which one saw

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Tentative Program CEA Annual Meeting

The Program Committee: Carl J. Weber (Colby College), chairman; Cleanth Brooks (Louisiana), J. Homer Caskey (Ohio University) Norman Foerster (Iowa), Miriam R. Small (Wells College), Elizabeth W. Manwaring (Wellesley).

Thursday, December 26:

10-12 A. M.: English Composition: Required and Elective Work.

1. "A Philosophy for Required Freshman English": Theodore Morrison (Harvard College).
2. Discussion.
3. "The Vocational 'Liberal Art':" Edith C. Johnson (Wellesley).
4. Discussion.

2-4 P. M.: "Majoring in English."

1. "A History of English Language as Requisite in the Major"; Professor Dorothy Bethuran, Connecticut College.
2. Discussion.
3. "Tutorial Method as Practiced at Princeton"; Professor Robert Cawley, Princeton.
4. Discussion.

Friday, December 27:

10-12 A. M.: Criticism and the Teaching of Undergraduate English.

1. Title of paper to be announced: Arthur Mizener (Wells College)
2. Discussion.
3. Title to be announced: Robert P. Warren (Louisiana State Un.)
4. Discussion.

2-4 P. M.: What Can Teachers of English Do to Help Preserve the Democratic Tradition in America?

1. "What shall we include in the fundamental courses in literature?": Lenthiel H. Downs (Presbyterian College, Clinton, So. Car.)
2. Discussion.
3. "What values shall we emphasize? How shall we present them?": speaker to be announced.
4. Discussion.

All papers or talks are to be limited to 25 or 30 minutes, in order to allow ample time for discussion.

Surveying the Realms of Gold

English teachers are incorrigible perfectionists. Though no mathematics teacher would assume that integral calculus was within the comprehension of every college student, the English instructor often makes the equally daring hypothesis that anyone can read. Finding in dismay that this is not true, that it is impossible to be literary guide, interpreter, philosopher, and friend to students who see no difference between Pope and Milton, he betrays bewilderment and despair.

Perhaps more contemporary literature should be read—possibly contemporary literature is an admission of defeat—maybe the best thing is to give up all pretense of literary appreciation, and resort to the safe scientific ground of historical data. These are but symptoms of our confusion.

One of the most popular recommendations has been that of a study of representative authors. This has important merits which should not be overlooked—the intensive study of selected masterpieces, training in analysis and interpretation, and, above all, the companionship that a reasonably long acquaintance with any author provides. It has one great drawback, and that is simply that one never knows where the lightning might strike.

An author of minor importance might be the very one to inspire a student with a love of literature. How many of us have paid our earliest homage to Dumas, Kipling, or Robert Service? Even experienced readers vary widely in their tastes. In this regard I was interested in a recent poll taken in my class in Eighteenth Century Literature. From ten authors studied, seven different ones were chosen as personal favorites. Counting both first and second choices, Defoe, Pope, Boswell, and Burns ranked as most popular, followed closely by Swift, Gray, and Sheridan. How many of these are representative authors? The only writers whose elimination might safely be considered by the text-book editor (and then solely on the grounds of popularity) are Dryden, Addison, and Johnson, though Addison received one first place.

The survey of English Literature is a charge of grape-shot (or perhaps some who have been directing it for years will prefer to consider it a machine-gun barrage). It may not wound severely or hit one specific objective, but it can hit almost anywhere.

Before embracing the representative authors so enthusiastically, let us ask, rather skeptically, representative of what? In most cases the answer must be, historically representative. But does the fact

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The author, the critic, and the college teacher of English may be partners in an exalted enterprise.

Editorial

If we could merge a psychiatrist, a critic, a pedagogical expert, and a literary historian, perhaps the resulting creature might be able to answer a very simple question, to wit: have students of the present generation been benefited or harmed by the mutitude of anthologies in classrooms and on library shelves?

The case for the anthology is simply stated. It brings a broader picture of any field of literature within the vision of anyone who cannot afford a library of books. The case for the prosecution is more difficult to formulate, and harder to prove.

First, anthologists are prone to make their selections from preceding anthologies, with the result that a poet or story-writer may come to be known by one or two items constantly reprinted. These may represent only early work, or give at best an inadequate impression of the author's range.

Second, because publishing is a commercial enterprise, certain monetary considerations must affect the selections in any anthology. If, for instance, the writings of Kipling or Conrad are closely guarded by the owners of copyright, the makers of an anthology may be forced to omit them even though the scheme of his books makes their inclusion of supreme importance. Conversely, he may be forced to include selections which are weak or inappropriate, because he can get them free of charge.

A third consideration is the danger that any young person who owns an anthology may come to feel that he has all he needs in order to acquaint himself with a person or period or a phase of literature.

During the birth pangs of CEA many suggestions were offered as to publication. Three seemed to the founding committee to be especially worth considering. First was the suggestion that no elaborate magazine be launched in competition with the many educational journals now in existence. The monthly journal, for instance, gotten out for the College Section of the National Council may serve some of our purposes, and might easily serve us better in the future.

Second was the suggestion that we issue some practical and unpretentious bulletin at intervals for the exchange of ideas and the publication of notices. This we are doing.

Third was the suggestion of several, but especially of Mr. John Erskine, that the CEA publish, instead of a magazine, an occasional worthy paper by one of its own members. A series of eight or ten leaflets of this sort annually, selected by a competent editorial committee and scattered throughout the year would have this advantage: members could buy the ones in which they might be interested and not be forced to buy pages of reading matter they would never read.

This third suggestion has not been followed and its desirability might well be a subject for discussion at the annual meeting. Two such papers by friends of the Association whose literary activities lie outside the field of teaching have been offered, and it might be possible to test the value of the suggestion by asking how many members would purchase such leaflets if they were published in a series over the CEA imprint at, let us say, twenty cents per copy.

1. Discussion of the problems of the biographer and an effort to establish critical standards in biography, by Rupert Hughes.

2. "Short Words Are Words of Might" by Gelett Burgess; a study in words of one syllable, written with the serious purpose of demonstrating to young writers the strength that reveals itself in simple diction.

If such leaflets were published by us, how many members might be interested in securing copies of one or the other? Postcard replies to such a question might furnish valuable data for use in discussion of the question in December.

This *News Letter* is *not* a magazine or monthly review. It is merely the most convenient device for publishing notices and exchanging ideas among our membership. Eighty percent of the material in this issue, for instance, is unsolicited and the layout is not planned in advance. Your editor prints such matter as members are pleased to send in; exercising authority only as limit of space forces him to judge comparative values. Members who have something to say are urged to express it concisely and mail it before the impulse fades. November's pages are already beckoning.

No biography of recent years has made so immediate and so varied an appeal to so wide a group of readers as Hans Zinsser's "As I Remember Him".* The richness of the author's experience, his shifts from serious reflection upon problems of social and intellectual importance to the most spontaneous gaiety give the book a charm and quality of unexpectedness throughout that make it unique.

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*__As I Remember Him:__ The Biography of R. S. by Hans Zinsser; Little, Brown and Company.

It is of interest to teachers because of the many thoughtful comments upon education, and of especial interest to English teachers not only because it is skillful biography, but because of what it has to say about the importance of the humanities. The announcement of the author's death, following so soon after his publication of an autobiography foretelling it, is a dramatic incident without exact parallel in our literature.

Two quotations are here given with the permission of the publisher.

"Professional education and specialistic education present few problems. They have been taking care of themselves quite adequately for some time. The crux of the problem lies in the modern definition of a 'liberal' education. And here there remains a considerable difference of opinion.

"Mr. Hutchins, for instance, dissatisfied with what he calls the 'confusion of higher learning,' would eliminate from our universities the very things which make them indispensable to modern civilization—namely, the spirit of research and the guardianship of sound professional training. Even Abelard, whom we may call the first university president, knew better than this when, almost a thousand years ago, he urged doubt and inquiry as the essence of scholarship. No greater misfortune could happen to American universities than if Mr. Hutchins's views were to be adopted and research were relegated to a minor position. Man, unlike other animals, from the beginning of time has been driven by the 'how' and the 'why', yearning to achieve greater moral, aesthetic, and scientific clarity. From this uncomfortable impulse, the most painful penalty for the theft of an apple, has sprung intellectual progress. The teacher of almost any important branch of learning who is not interested in the exploration of new ideas or understanding is as out of place in a university as a prohibitionist in a wine cellar.

"One may agree with Mr. Hutchins, however, that fundamental to research or all other university fhnctions is the major obligation of providing what is spoken of as a 'liberal education'. For the ideal of any educational system, probably never quite attainable but always to be pursued, should be to find that formula for training which shall make men capable of appraising what Huxley has termed 'that immense capitalized experience of the human race which we call knowledge of various kinds.' Specialization can take off soundly only from such a foundation."

"In America the professor never held the respected position occupied by his European colleagues. The title was too often shared in our country by cornet players, boxing instructors, and dog trainers. Also, the American professor suffered from the fact that in many smaller colleges the teacher was a sort of underpaid employee of a president and lay board of trustees, who regarded him as something more than the janitor and a little less than the football coach. This condition was never strongly prevalent in the better universities, y it was not until quite recently th the public in general had any r spect for men who worked for sma pay on matters that seemed to ha no obvious economic value.

"By and large, however, profe sors have gained immensely, they deserve, in the public esteem Yet they remain, and always wi remain, a peculiar group by reaso of the very qualities that indu them to enter careers of scholar ship. Moreover, the lives they lea in concentration on highly specia ized disciplines, are apt to brin out traits that differentiate the from their run-of-the-mill contem poraries. There are all kinds of pro fessors: the inordinately vain typ most common in literature (parti ularly 'appreciation of poetry'), the Jehovah-complex type (philo ophy); the very much man-of-the world type (government, econom ics); the women's-lunch-club an general after-dinner type (educa tion, psychology); the notoriety hunter type (almost any depart ment); the recluse type (classicist English philology, Norse, Icelandi and so forth); the we-are-the-rea ly-important-ones type (almost an science), etc., etc. Of course I spec fy departments only as far as, i those named, I have met most o each variety. And then there ar the mathematicians who, like th Dodo, belong in a class by them selves. But even so, the type named are, for each departmen the exceptions. By and large, pro fessors are a dignified, learned, an superior class of human being differentiated from the herd b hard, intellectual discipline; frugal cultivated, and possessing the men tal poise that comes with the sou mastery of some branch of impo tant knowledge. I speak, of cours of professors in the central stru tures of universities, not includi the bay windows that have be added in the form of schools of ed ucation, journalism, business, an the like. Yet, as a complement t the specified virtues, there ar among professors more than th normal proportion of eccentri And as a class, it seems not unju to say that the practical-comm sense index is relatively low."

Of Greeting Where No Inflection Is

Greetings to those who daily kn
The uninflected, brief **Hello.**
Hello in manner phonographic
Is index of the social traffic,
And merits so this small attentio
This measured academic mention
Hello is round and telephonic,
Of emptiness the right mnemonic
It has no habitation local:
Hello is presence merely vocal
That strikes the ear like poise
lead,
A pan of sound entirely dead.
It may be north, it may be sout
The speaker makes indiffere
mouth
To shape this condescending, doub
Discourteous, curvilingual bubbl
This phoneme greeting vague
snow,
The circumambient, blank **Hello.**

August H. Mason,
University of Alaba

A Substitute for the Survey

Professor C. H. Gainer once composed twenty-odd lines of blank verse entitled "Miltonic Numbers as they Appear to the Sophomore Mind." The sound of the lines is sonorously Miltonic, but attentive reading discloses that they do not make any sense. However, by making no sense they make a very sensible comment on the problem of the survey course. The recent discussion in these pages is sufficient evidence that the average college English instructor is unable, in three hours a week, to alter the sophomore mind sufficiently to solve the problem. But all sophomores are not alike; to some—those with some literary capacity and background—Miltonic numbers do make sense. And there are others who, though deficient in training, have literary capacity and interest, and who intend to take courses beyond the survey and thus give us several years in which to train them. For these students most of the objections to the survey apply but slightly. For the others, we have introduced at Albright College a different sort of course. The results of this segregation, which has been in effect for three years, will perhaps be of interest to those who are facing the sophomore English problem. I am going to describe our experience from the point of view of a department head who has administered the plan but has not taught either course during its operation.

The survey course is required of those who plan a major or a minor in English, and is open to any other sophomores who wish to take it. Others fulfill the sophomore English requirement by taking a course (Introduction to Literature) arranged by types and containing, so far as possible, only material which the non-literary sophomore has some chance of comprehending. Selections of merely historical interest are eliminated. The bulk of the material is drawn from fairly recent literature, but older writings which can readily be made interesting are included. Although this is not a "World Literature" course, it is not limited to English literature. All the anthologies used have contained American selections, and we go to Continental literature for most of our outside reading. This consists of four books of narrative type, knowledge of which is tested by hour examinations. We have tried, among others, *The Iliad, Don Quixote, Cyrano de Bergerac,* and *Growth of the Soil, Cyrano* being by all odds the most popular, *Don Quixote* probably the least. The total amount of reading in this course is greater than in the survey, but most of the slow and difficult reading is eliminated. Eighty per cent or more of the students take this course. The survey contains, in addition to English majors and minors, a few students sent by history and language departments and a few who take it of their own volition.

One of the most important results is the improvement of the survey. The morale of the class is better, less time is wasted, the course can be aimed entirely at a homogeneous group, and the instructor feels no twinges of conscience in discussing historical developments and foreign influences. The better preparation in this foundation course naturally results in better work in the elective literature courses.

The success of the "non-survey" is attested by both groups concerned. The instructors who have taught it (all of whom had previously taught the survey) are enthusiastic about the new program, and, as indicated above, it is popular with the students. Although we have no satisfactory objective measure of its success, the American Council on Education's Cooperative Literary Acquaintance Test, taken by all our sophomores last spring, throws some light on the matter. This test was given to sophomores in seventy-six colleges. As it is based largely on the older literature, students who have been deprived of the survey might be expected to have poor scores. The average score of our women approximated the sixty-second percentile score for the whole group; the average of our men approximated the forty-third. This would indicate that our sophomores, though most of them spend less time on the older literature, remember as much of it as sophoores in other colleges, most of whom are required to take the survey. This encourages us to believe that we have lost little, if anything, of educational value by excusing non-literary students from the survey; and we feel sure that more of them enjoy the new course and fewer acquire a distaste for literature.

There are difficulties, however, which should be considered by anyone contemplating a change to this plan. One is the custom, in many colleges, of delaying declaration of majors until the end of the sophomore year. This is a difficulty we did not face, as our custom is to have majors chosen by the end of the freshman year. The fact that the student has a smaller number of sections to choose from—especially in the survey—causes occasional schedule difficulties and occasionally costs us a major, more frequently a minor. A student who decides to change his major or minor to English after his sophomore year may be deterred if he finds he has to take another sophomore course which will not count toward the elective hours required for a major. Some, however, have been willing to do so; and most of those who change have already taken the survey because they intended to minor in English. Other students may be deterred from declaring a major or a minor in English because they think the survey as now given is harder than the alternative course, but their loss is hardly to be regretted. Another difficulty is the scarcity of anthologies planned for this sort of course, but we have been able to find several books that are quite usable. Finally, no one should rashly adopt this plan with the thought of merely giving it a trial, for a return to the survey-for-all system would probably cause a violent student rebellion.

J. B. Douds,
Albright College.

A Voice of Misgiving

My skepticism of the CEA is, frankly, growing. When I received the first announcement of the founding of our association, I felt at least mildly enthusiastic about the establishment of an agency through which to voice our conviction that the English professor's objectives lie apart from the interests and temperaments of PMLA researchers and the Educationists. But I was suspicious, as others must have been, of what the vague residue might be, with these two most clearly directed groups among us invited to leave.

My present conception of what we are is based largely on the *News Letter* and one series of New England meetings. Certainly there have been stimulating and admirable moments in both, which I would not minimize, but somehow, over a period of time, I begin to feel the oppressive collective presence of the "English teacher," which on many a college campus has a discomforting connotation among the Philistines outside. Perhaps there are actually many recognizable subdivisions of the familiar social type "college professor" and it would be easy to place the sober, preoccupied mathematician or the loud and breezy economist. But that makes me no more at ease with those kindly, dull faces with the English teacher look, whooping it up for literature and the poetic essence and the eternal values.

To the admitted fallacies that the most valuable English professors are devotees of research publication or students of Education I would add two others, which appear all too often in the pages of the *News Letter*s that they should be creative artists (often frustrated to be teaching at all) or simply dillettantes in the arts, with a fondness for books (especially their covers) and for student bull sessions, both in class and out. The romantic haze that these two groups contribute in abundance to English teaching has given disturbing unreality to the materials and methods of our work.

All too often English professors are men who started by wanting to read literature, not to teach it, and end, perhaps, by playing bridge. Some smoke pipes to show that literature can be he-man and line study walls with books to feel the glow of them. Academic aesthetes in youth, they have ripened into "humanists," appallingly out of touch with the new world of their students and their day.

It makes me for one a bit uncomfortable to identify myself with a crew who are so revolted by any allusion to the social sciences, who resent any effort to entangle literature in social backgrounds or the problems of our time. Similarly, they may be content to dismiss the findings of psychology and Education without ever having honestly explored them, simply because the sciences may encroach upon our ivory cause. I for one am not interested in assuring myself that science has nothing to tell me about teaching my students or about reading and evaluating books. I don't want to prove that in a changing world our evaluation of literature and our teaching methods cannot change, nor am I sympathetic with the familiar blasts in the *News Letter* against the practical attitude toward life. It smacks of the point of view of one too cowardly to face his world and too lazy to overhaul his convictions. It is a comfortable escape to wallow in benign complacency in the realms of poesy and arm-chair philosophy, and pay two dollars a year to prove to college administrations that this is hard, respectable, essential work.

We cannot prove our high purpose by sitting smug and tight and simply enunciating our indispensability, nor should we be surprised that this ramshackle practice in the past has inspired the criticism of which many CEA members seem now so indignantly contemptuous As I survey the mystical, self-satisfied group who predominate at our meetings, I am not sure that they are any closer to our real problems than the despised research scholars or the Educationists.

letter reflects no disbelief in the letter reflects no disbelief in the high and difficult purpose of English teaching, but rather a growing dismay at the unrealistic smugness of English teachers. I think that the CEA should have been established, not to hold the fort for our vague purposes and methods of the past and present, but rather to set our house in order, if we are as a group temperamentally capable of doing so.

Two things, I believe, cry out to be done by the CEA. First, a concrete consideration of teaching methods in our various fields which does not romantically summarize them as "inspirational," which does not, with irrevelant Oxford precedent, pin faith in smoking at a dozen young fellows around a table and exuding the rapture of poetry and the good things of life. All too long has our crowd blandly dismissed technique and method with the contention that our objectives are intangible and our results immeasurable. If we are now severely challenged by the Educationists, it is because we have superciliously refused to come to grips with our problems in the past. If our purpose is going to outlive the Classics departments much longer, it is up to us to prove that we have counter-proposals and achievements to justify it. Mr. I. A. Richard's article in the May *News Letter* lilustrates, though too briefly, the sort of study that I have in mind.

Second, a revaluation of the very literature that we are teaching to prove and characterize the vitality of the authentic classics and deal summarily with the traditional survivals that have no longer meaning for our students and our time. It has sometimes seemed unfortunate to me that the permanent accessibility of books on library shelves frees them from the need to prove their worth to us from year to year, as the masters of music must do in the concert hall. When one adds to this the unthinking conservatism of the average academic, his servile acceptance of literary canon and conventional evaluations, his gener-

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A Voice of Misgiving

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al lack of true critical faculty, one need not wonder that so few students develop an honest appreciation of the enduring things in literature, however much they may be awed into accepting the traditions. Professor George Anderson's stimulating paper on Old English Literature at last year's New England meeting admirably illustrated the possibilities in this field of study.

There is room, of course, for other activities, but these two problems impress me as the most urgent justifications of the founding of the CEA. If they are not to receive greater consideration by us as a group, the editors of the *News Letter* may soon be embarrassed by a dearth of material or by its repetitiousness.

Let it be understood that my criticisms in this letter are directed against English teachers as a professional group, certainly not individually, for many others are at least as keenly aware of this general problem as I. The healthy frankness of many contributions to the *News Letter* has emboldened me to a communication in kind.

Robert Warnock,
University of Connecticut.

A Word of Encouragement

Dear Editor:

The May "News Letter" and the CEA's statement of principles have belatedly reached my desk, and I am writing to tell you of my pleasure in reading them. Though I am not a teacher, I have a professional and personal interest in the way literature is taught. I recall how, as an undergraduate majoring in English (never, after I had learned to read, had I dreamed of majoring in anything else), I was dismayed to find that the principal effect of literature courses, as they were taught to me, was to suppress the love of reading. The trouble seemed to arise from the curious humility of my instructors. Some of them taught literature as if it were a catechism in which every question had its required answer; some regarded it as a minor phase of history or sociology; some evidently considered it a branch of etiquette, the objective being to acquire the socially acceptable attitudes toward the socially acceptable authors. None of them dared to believe—or, at any rate, gave his students reason to believe — that literature is, in the words of the CEA statement, "one of the fine arts, and that its criticism and appreciation are essential to a liberal education."

If literature is to be restored to the high place which Arnold claimed for it, there must come from our colleges a great wave of enthusiasm, buoyancy, daring — a downright aggressiveness in asserting the prime importance of literature among human activities. The CEA and its "News Letter" seem well on the way toward leadership of such a movement, and I wish you all success.

L. I. Redmond.

A Reappraisal

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apply new critical methods to the teaching of English literature, and to the study of it as well. This group is eager to set up canons and standards of judgment, and is often not a little intolerant of the historical and more pedestrian methods of its elders. Moreover, this group is almost fiercely interested in the problems of making literature a vital subject to its pupils, and is combatively set against the encroachments which have been made upon the study of literature by the Social Sciences. It is conceivable that this group of the College English Association may in time become the Critical Section of the Modern Language Association.

The greater part of the membership of the College English Association is made up of more othodox teachers from the colleges who are keenly interested in their tasks. They wish to have an association in which they may exchange ideas concerning the methods of classroom instruction, the contents of standard courses, and to develop the practice and the philosophy of their total position. In their groups they discuss such topics as the teaching of composition, both to freshmen and upperclassmen, the higher art of writing, the introductory courses in literature, the contents and methods of survey courses, the advisability of having such courses at all, the English major, in what it should consist, and how its ends may be accomplished. And then, above all, and of interest to the whole Association, are the major questions concerning the significance of literature as an activity of the human mind and the part it should play in a liberal education.

The new organization then is an association for the teachers of English in the colleges of the country in which practical and philosophical questions concerned with their profession may be debated. The Association revolts from the control of English literature by the psychologists, the Social Scientists, and the professional Educators of the Teachers College, and revolts for free untrammelled discussions of the problems which confront its members in the performance of their daily and yearly tasks.

William C. DeVane
Yale University,
President of the C.E.A.

8 ASCAP Fellowships For Creative Work

The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers has established The ASCAP Fellowship Competition for composers and authors of college musical plays, offering annually eight awards of $720 each. For purposes of the Competition, the country has been divided into eight regions. Both undergraduates and graduates are eligible to compete. Musical plays entered in the Competition must have been produced on a campus, during the current or preceding academic year. Faculty committees in each region will judge the merits of scripts and scores submitted, and will, according to standards which they set up, award the fellowship in each area to the composer (s) and author(s) of the best musical play.

It is the hope of the Society that the Competition may in time yield permanent additions to our stock of ballad-, chamber-, and folk-operas, as well as musical comedies and operettas of more poetic and imaginative quality than the usual campus musical shows now in vogue.

During 1939-40, the first year of the Competition, the winning plays have been musical comedies, three of them showing a certain promise in the field of the satire theatre. The infusion of satiric revue elements into musical comedy, which has been apparent from *Of Thee I Sing* to *Louisiana Purchase* has had an effect on student tastes. It is no doubt a healty sign, for now if ever is a time when a dash of the Aristophanic temper would be a welcome ingredient in our national artistic scheme.

The Society hopes that these fellowship awards will prove, for students who show promise in playwriting and in musical composition for the theatre, an encouragement to continue their creative work. Many of the leading members of ASCAP, which is the performing rights Society for American music, started their careers by writing college musical plays. Deems Taylor's first experience of creative work for the stage was his writing of "The Echo," for a dramatic group at New York University—a musical comedy immediately adopted for Broadway production. Rodgers and Hart and Arthur Schwartz wrote musical plays as undergraduates at the same University. Oscar Hammerstein II did similar work at Columbia. Cole Porter developed his musical talent in college musicals at Yale and Harvard. Harold Rome, whose socially significant songs in current New York revues are outstanding, was a pillar of musical activities at Yale. Otto Harbach, dean of American librettists, was a leader of playwright activities during hs student days at Knox, and later as an English teacher at Whitman, inspired students to great interest in amateur dramatics. Since these and other ASCAP members among them supply the music for screen, stage and radio, it is possible for the Society to get winning scripts considered by commercial theatre and cinema producers.

Members of the CEA who are interested in calling this competition to the attention of their students, and who would like full particulars on it, are invited to address inquiries to the undersigned, who is a fellow-member of CEA and educational counselor for ASCAP, at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City.

The new brochures describing the terms of the Competition for 1940-41 will soon be off the press. May 15th, 1941, will be the deadline for the submission of musical plays to the judges in each region.

S. Stephenson Smith.

CEA members will please mention this News Letter when writing advertisers.

Business-Letter Forms

Mr. Gavit was asked by a text-book publisher to send them some of his letters to use as models. He lets us publish his reply.—Ed.)

Although I perceive that your letter dated 17th inst. is of a circular character I should be glad to assist you in the commendable enterprise of trying to tell people who couldn't do it to save their lives how to write "human" letters. Unfortunately I have no such letters as you ask for; nor any secretary to hunt for them in my files. But I will say this, and you are at liberty to make any use of it, with or without my signature; or to throw it away, as may best suit your convenience:

The trouble with all "business" correspondence is that it is not "human." It is based upon the quite fallacious assumption that "business is business," while other relationships are something else. There has grown up since God-knows-when the idea that "business" correspondence must be in accordance with certain forms in such case made and provided, and scrupulously devoid of any human quality. My own idea, acquired during fifty-odd years of many and diverse kinds of activity, and carried out in practice, is that every letter is a necessary but regrettable substitute for conversation between one human being and another; that whatever its subject it ought to express the personality of the writer as in contact with the personality of the recipient—with due regard, of course, to the circumstances in each case. I should advise any writer of a letter on any subject, to throw away all the models and write as he feels, in the vernacular of himself. As you say yourself: "It depends on getting into the right attitude . . . Conveying honest feeling." That's it, precisely. What a joy it is to receive a letter from anybody, on any subject, which shows on its face that the writer said, in his own words, the thing that was on his mind:

At the same time, and on the other hand, every writer of a letter should remember carefully *that it says what it says; no more nor less.* It registers his state of mind at the time of writing, and goes on saying it, days, weeks, months, years thereafter. Every letter should be written in view of the fact that *it lasts as it stands,* no matter how differently the writer may feel. I have learned by bitter experience never to write to anybody, on any subject, anything that I wouldn't be willing to have published, not merely now but twenty, fifty, a thousand years hence, as a true expression of myself.

It seems to me more or less futile to put into the hands of people who are unable or unwilling to put *themselves* into their correspondence, forms as such, written with sincerity by others. The trouble with most of the modern correspondence is that people don't say anything worth while chiefly because they haven't anything worth while to say. You can't get a good letter out of an empty head.

John Palmer Gavit.

Creative Writing

Professionally successful authors have gone on record in opposition to college courses tabbed "Creative Writing." Like those who barge in where angelic beings timidly refrain, I would put down some comments on such courses, based on an experience of several years.

Difficulty has arisen over the purpose of the courses. Should those burning with writer's itch be shown an ascending scale of grades, or should they write for the sake of discipline, stimulation and enjoyment? Should the test of the course be the sale of a manuscript or a degree of personal satisfaction with what has been accomplished? My motivation has been three-fold: discipline, stimulation and enjoyment. Students have unanimously recognized the need for and the good derived from the discipline of regular work; most have been stimulated; some enjoyed writing.

There have been other considerations. Among regularly enrolled undergraduates I have noted a thin foundation of reading and a limited background of experience. Among students in a university Teachers College (Fordham) the reading and experience backgrounds have been richer. Practically all of the latter had had business or professional experience, as well as more substantial personal contacts in social and business life. The informal essay and the character sketch as developed by students in each group provided ample evidence of the difference in backgrounds and the effect of that difference on writing.

Diction difficulties also offered cause for thought. All too frequently the 5 & 10 words crowded the 98 centers off the page. When the 98 centers appeared they were not comfortably cushioned among their fellows. There was a lack of naturalness in their employment. True, the 5 & 10-ers expressed thoughts, but they did little else. Facility and naturalness in the use of diction that was better chosen and of richer background and connotation marked the occasional paper. Part of the diction problem could be traced to foreign language background in homes, part of it to sluggish habits of thought and work. Appreciation of Latin, Greek or Romance roots came infrequently from those whose secondary studies had not included such language contacts. Slang was used at such with telling effect, on occasion, or as acceptable usage, and then light dawned.

And then there came the question of content and form. Did the papers, generally speaking, have to be pleasant but inocuous, or could they be pleasant and powerful—in thought content? Practically every Janjack among us considers his thoughts potent. Undergraduates are frequently most positive in their conviction. Could these papers present political and social convictions? The ability to fit an informal essay with a fireside and chat about the merits of the New Deal was possessed by very few. They admitted, too, that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had both literary and social value, and some were strongly persuaded that Manifesto thoughts could be togged out in literary bib and tucker. The persuasion was stronger than deed.

The method of conducting an advanced course had to be adjusted from time to time. Scalpeling a model essay had mixed results. Some students found an examination of an interesting essay quite helpful; others demurred. Public examination of student papers (avoiding the writer's identity) had beneficial results for a majority of students. An exchange of opinion both on form and content at times resulted in papers dealing with related materials. The instructor was firmly informed that his reading voice could easily "make or break" a paper. Mimeographed copies of an essay or sketch occasionally provided a less personal presentation of the paper under examination. Rather extensive written criticisms supplemented both classroom comments and conference discussions. Taken together, the components of the method of conduct, in any given term, spelled Work, but it was pleasant and worthwhile.

These observations and reflections sum up easily. Granted a common understanding, during the first meeting, of ends and means, mutual recognition of values came into being as the course progressed. Upon inquiry by the instructor, students in several sections over a period of years indicated that the discipline of regular work and regular criticism was the primary value. Opinion was divided as to stimulation. Some, whose sense of humor was non-existent, found stimulation meant irritation, without interesting results in writing. Others were affected, apparently, by the weather and the condition of student politics. And, of course, there were a few credit gatherers, whose yes-and-no attitude meant little. Enjoyment rated highly on both sides of the desk. And one of the pleasant after-effects has been occasional visits from those who have "dashed off a little something, and would you mind reading it."

Francis P. Kilcoyne,
Brooklyn College.

Surveying the Realms of Gold

(Continued from Page 1)

that periods are labelled the ages of Dryden, Pope, Johnson, and Tennyson mean that students will enjoy or find greater rewards from these authors than from their respective contemporaries Pepys, Swift, Gray, or Emily Bronte? By no means.

The representative authors course is often merely another historical course, more artfully disguised, but perhaps even more limited in its appeal. In literature we have valleys and charming foothills as well as mountain tops. The rippling brooks of occasional verse and light humor are too often overlooked by the staid moralists who edit our texts. Let us have at least a touch of Lewis Carroll, W. S. Gilbert, Austin Dobson, and Calverly. Are we teachers, or more important, are the students, willing to forego the charms of the lowlands for the perhaps more bracing but certainly rarer air of the peaks?

Richard M. Kain,
Ohio Wesleyan University.

Experiment in Freshman English

The increasing number of rhetorics, handbooks, and collections of essays indicates a certain dissatisfaction on the part of teachers of Freshman Composition both with the content and with the method of presenting the course to college students. Certainly Freshman English has developed (or degenerated) into a course which tries to put emphasis on such varied subjects as reading the classics, studying the essay and short story, learning rules of grammar and punctuation, discussing the laws and principles of rhetoric and sometimes, incidentally, writing themes.

Last year, after more than a decade of the time-honored method of teaching composition, I decided to try with one of my sections the laboratory plan of teaching, to put the whole emphasis on writing, and, through a series of objective tests, to compare the results with those from a like section in which I followed the old method. The results, though not conclusive, were interesting.

Before describing in detail the method and the results I ought to say that Freshman English at the institution where I teach runs from September to June, meeting three hours each week. Through placement tests the students are divided into four groups: those who, because of excellent high school preparation, are exempt from Freshman Composition altogether (about 15%); those of the remainder who are superior (15%); the intermediates (55%); and the slow (15%).

For my experiment I chose two intermediate sections. With section I the following orthodox method was used. Each week the student prepared outside of class a two-hundred word theme (including a rough draft), which was red-pencilled and returned to the student for corrections. Every two weeks the student reported in class on an approved book in his field of interest. Daily assignments were made and class discussions were held in a textbook of grammar and rhetoric. During the second quarter one hour each week, and during the third, two hours each week were devoted to a study of a book of essays.

With section II the following plan was used. No parallel reading was required (though students were urged to read widely). No textbook in grammar and rhetoric was required (except for a one-page mimeographed list of essential rules in punctuation and grammar to be used for correcting themes). One hour each week during the second and third terms was given over to a study of the volume of essays used by section I. The remainder of the class time was devoted to work in a vocabulary building workbook and a dictionary. Finally, three two-hundred word themes were required each week.

In September and again in May three objective tests were given to both sections.

Here is a summary of the results of the tests given to the two sections of eighteen students each. Section I showed an average gain of 4.05 points on the Southeastern Aptitude examination, whereas section II (laboratory method) gained an average of 4.68 points; and on the Schrammel-Wharton test section I gained an average of 5.11, whereas section II gained an average of 7.11 points. Moreover, in section I there were twelve tests (out of fifty-four) which showed a lower grade in May than in September; whereas in section II only seven tests showed a decrease.

The reader can draw his own conclusions from these figures, but a few facts may well be pointed out. In the first place, the laboratory section (section II) showed a greater improvement than section I in all three tests. Second, Section I did relatively better in the vocabulary test than in the other tests. Third, fewer students failed to gain under the laboratory method.

It is too early to draw dogmatic general conclusions concerning the laboratory method as opposed to the orthdox method of teaching Freshman Composition. One may, however, be permitted to suggest that this experiment bears out the wisdom of two ancient and time-tried principles of education: that one learns best by doing, and that doing one thing at a time well is better than attempting to do a great many things at one time. Teachers of Freshman Composition in trying to emphasize too many things have been a little like the man who rushed out of his house, jumped on his horse, and rode furiously in all directions at once.

Kenneth D. Coates,
Wofford College (So. Car.)

Literary Experimentation

(Continued from Page 1)

the masts of ships or a stretch of gray sea. The feeling of the sea that one got through those square windows was remarkable, and gave me a sense of the fleets of Dutch ships that ply quietly on all the waters of the globe—to Java, etc.

In my book I tried to make Professor St. Peter's house rather overcrowded and stuffy with new things; American proprieties, clothes, furs, petty ambitions, quivering jealousies — until one got rather stifled. Then I wanted to open the square window and let in the fresh air that blew off the Blue Mesa, and the fine disregard of trivialities which was in Tom Outland's face and in his behaviour.

The above concerned me as a writer only, but the Blue Mesa (the Mesa Verde) actually was discovered by a young cow-puncher in just this way. The great explorer, Nordenkjold, wrote a scientific book about this discovery, and I myself had the good fortune to hear the story of it from a very old man, brother to Dick Wetherell. Dick Wetherell as a young boy forded Mancos River and rode into the Mesa after lost cattle. I followed the real story very closely in Tom Outland's narrative.

Willa Cather.

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Writing for Oral Presentation

The report printed in the March *News Letter* of my experimental section of Rhetoric 1 was written late in October, when only six weeks of the semester had passed. Here is a brief report of the work of the entire semester.

Values

(1) The circular seating arrangement helped all members of the group to feel equality of opportunity and responsibility.

(2) The avoidance of the word *theme* helped make the work have more general implications and more general interest than is usual in "rhetoric" classes.

(3) The writing of papers as if for a good newspaper gave an air of practical purpose to the papers (e.g.: news reports, editorials, feature articles, reviews of a moving picture and of a book, rewriting of another's work, accounts of interviews, articles on one side of a controversial question, etc.)

(4) At almost every meeting throughout the course, one or more students voluntarily had brought a dictionary, because of the live concern over the meaning of words.

(5) An unusual sensitiveness was aroused about the faulty reference of pronouns, unwarranted shifts in point of view, lack of parallelism in structure, and dangling elements.

(6) The students came to have a closer grasp than usual of the need for developing a topic.

(7) Voice-consciousness, and a striving for improved use of voice, both were aroused; the oral presentation and criticism by students helped bring this about, and a recording of the students' voices and a listening to the recordings at the studio of radio station WILL also helped.

(8) Because of the immediate criticism by the class, the students wrote with an unusual concern for arousing reader-listener interest and approval.

(9) Most papers were *voluntarily* rewritten after they had been presented orally and criticized.

(10) Both in writing and in talking, the students came to have a greater awareness of the fact that their contemporaries in daily life pass judgment on their expressions.

(11) The students individually gained a new awareness of their ability to pass judgment on the expressions of their contemporaries.

(12) The program caused more students to participate in the class work than is usual, and it caused them to participate more frequently.

Weakness

The class had *much too little drill* with exercises in: (a) outlining, (b) summarizing, (c) study of words, especially of word formation, (d) punctuation, (e) syntax (parsing and diagraming), (f) coherence.

Suggestions for further experimentation

More drill might be provided than I used. Exercises for drill of of the sorts indicated above are well supplied in the textbook, *A Freshman Guide to Writing*, which I used as a reference book, together with *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, fifth edition. Time for class drill would mean the curtailment of the program I followed. I suggest that at the outset of the semester some drill be given in outlining and summarizing. Further, I suggest that the first four or five written papers be presented orally, with oral criticism by members of the group, and also the last three or four. Then I suggest that the intervening eight or ten papers not presented orally, and the hours that would have been devoted to their presentation and criticism be used for drills with the exercises in the text.

After the above statement of my personal judgment, I venture to add a few—only a few—statistics. All entering freshmen in September had to take the same placement test. The lowest third (approximately) of the freshmen were placed in "special" sections, in order to be given special instruction in fundamentals. My experimental section was simply one of the "special" sections; the students in it were not selected with a view towards experimentation. All freshmen in Rhetoric I, in both regular and "special" sections, were given the same final examination at the end of the semester. Part of the September placement test was a 100-point objctive test; and part of the January final examination was another 100-point objective test, similar to the one given in September. For all freshmen the average score on the January objective test was 54.935, on the September test 47.884; the improvement in January was thus 7.051 points. For all "special" section freshmen the average objective test scores were 46.45 in January, and 37.67 in September; the improvement in January was thus 9.78 points. In my experimental "special" section the average objective test scores were 44.47 in January, and 35.73 in September; the improvement, 8.84 points. These figures indicate that my section averaged greater improvement than all the freshmen did, but that it averaged less improvement than all the "special" sections did. Now my section was given almost no class drill, as stated above; whereas the other "special" sections were given a good deal. The figures indicate, therefore, that further experimentation should provide more class drill than I gave, and also that it should retain a considerable amount of the program of "writing for oral presentation."

William D. Templeman,
University of Illinois.

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